

REGIONAL PARKS

EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

January 6, 1997

Lester A. Snow
Executive Director
CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM
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Dear Mr. Snow:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the "Implementation Objectives and Targets" for the CalFED Bay-Delta Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan. The East Bay Regional Park District is a Special District serving Alameda and Contra Costa counties with shoreline parks and trails extending from the southern border of Alameda County along San Francisco Bay, throughout San Pablo Bay and Suisun Bay and along the Sacramento and San Joaquin delta in eastern Contra Costa County. Within this District, there are 156 miles of bay shoreline and 34 miles of Delta levees.

Over the years, our agency has developed a commitment to acquire, preserve and enhance open space and unique upland and wetland properties along the shoreline of our two county jurisdiction and to provide the public the opportunity to recreate and appreciate the value of these unique resource areas. The District manages six public fishing piers, including the Eckley Pier currently under construction in the Carquinez Strait. In addition, through a program of balanced habitat protection and interpretation (for all ages) we are creating a strong sense of stewardship and support for additional park and trail acquisitions in the future in these highly sensitive and threatened areas.

East Bay Regional Park District has actively worked on joint management and stewardship issues with all of the water agencies in the East Bay, which includes Alameda County Water District, Contra Costa Water District, East Bay Municipal Utility District and the San Francisco Water Department, a substantial land owner in Alameda County. The District has also developed long term management partnerships with the State's Departments of Water Resources and Parks & Recreation.



The CalFED Bay Delta Ecosystem Restoration Program presents some unique opportunities for the creation of cooperative ventures and partnerships to further the overall goals of enhancing the Bay-Delta ecosystem, improving water quality and stimulating and re-establishing fisheries that have been degraded over the last 50-100 years. Our District has made a number of individual and cooperative efforts toward that goal by creating additional wetland habitat at Hayward Shoreline Park and Oro Loma Marsh and have acquired threatened habitat areas in the Delta such as the 984 acres now under our control in the Big Break area in Oakley. We are also working cooperatively with a number of other agencies to re-establish salmon and steelhead runs in Walnut Creek, Wildcat Creek and Alameda Creek and to restore important habitat to guarantee the success of that effort. The opportunity to create additional cooperative ventures with the CalFED program would allow both our agencies to further many common goals.

Because of the diverse issues and opportunities associated with the Bay-Delta Restoration Program, a team of District staff representing Wildlife Biology, Fisheries Biology, Interpretation, Land Acquisition, Regional Trails, Planning, Design, Operations, Finance and Parklands had the opportunity to discuss and review the Implementation Objectives and Targets document and the following comments and subject areas were considered important considerations for your review in establishing a final direction for the program:

- **Funding sources to maintain approved capital projects should be identified.**
Although Proposition 204 funds may be used to build various restoration projects, there are funding restrictions in operations and maintenance once the project is completed. Reliable, long-term sources of funding should be identified to assure that restoration projects will continue to be successful through a program of ongoing maintenance and operations.
- **Public education should be a critical component of the Ecosystem Restoration Program.** CalFED should seek to provide a diverse array of innovative public programs, to interpret the Bay-Delta Ecosystem Restoration Program, water conveyance and the ecology of the Delta in general. It should communicate to the public its vision of what improvements in ecosystem health it seeks to achieve and should assist this effort by providing educational material regarding delta hydrology, wildlife habitat and wetlands management. A unique opportunity to accomplish this effort would be to join the consortium of agencies and educational institutions (EBRPD, CCWD, Iron House Sanitary, Los Medanos College, Cal State University, Liberty Union School District, Audubon Society) already committed to establishing a Delta Science Center on property being donated by the Iron House Sanitary District in Oakley adjacent to the Big Break area of the Delta.
- **The San Francisco Bay should be recognized as an additional ecological zone.**
Limiting the scope of the program to incorporate only San Pablo Bay and to not include the San Francisco Bay diminishes the value of the total program. Species diversity exists throughout the entire bay and vital habitat areas, circulation and water quality issues and watershed discharge in the southern half of the bay are just as critical to the health of the entire bay ecosystem as areas to the north. Extensive mudflat areas and marsh land are

host to many of the organisms vital to the health of many sports fisheries and fish species in general. Restoration and re-establishment of marshland sites is a critical component to the filtering of toxics and habitat creation of numerous threatened and endangered vertebrates.

Ecological zones should also be recognized for the unique stream restoration projects in the East Bay. In addition to habitat restoration efforts currently under study on a number of the major drainages that feed into San Francisco Bay, San Pablo Bay and Suisun Bay, other opportunities abound to improve migration access further upstream of a number of these important streams. The following are some excellent examples of projects that would enhance salmonid fisheries in the Bay-Delta region.

Wildcat Creek. In 1983, native rainbow trout were transplanted from San Leandro Creek to several places in the upper Wildcat Creek watershed, with the long-range goal of re-establishing a viable steelhead run. However, several barriers continue to prevent this from occurring. At the lower end of this Creek, Contra Costa Flood Control, in conjunction with several state and federal agencies, has improved anadromous fish passage into the headwaters.

Walnut Creek. In 1993, EBRPD, Contra Costa County Flood Control District and several other public agencies completed "The Walnut Creek Channel Recreation & Revegetation Plan". This joint study identified several design alternatives that will protect and enhance the runs of native salmon and steelhead, create additional wildlife habitat and enhance the aesthetic character of this river corridor. Bypassing drop structures with fish ladders or re-introducing fish into a bypass stream adjacent to Walnut Creek could add over a mile of new spawning area and increase the success of the fishery in this urban area. This creek empties into Pt. Edith Wildlife Area, owned by the State and the Department of the Navy.

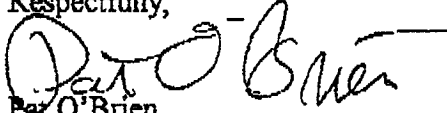
Marsh Creek. Habitat restoration and barrier removal could increase fishery migration in this major drainage into the Big Break Delta area. There is also a need to reduce the high concentrations of mercury in this riparian corridor.

Alameda Creek. Alameda Creek is the major drainage of the County into the bay and even now efforts are underway to re-establish salmonid migration opportunities into this still mostly undisturbed drainage area. This stream has many miles of undisturbed natural riparian area just upstream of flood control structures. Efforts to bypass these structures could re-introduce a major salmonid migration into Niles Canyon and the Sunol Valley, adding over 15 miles of new breeding territory.

The CalFED Bay-Delta Ecosystem Restoration Program is a two-fold effort, water conveyance and ecosystem health and vitality. The public made this program a strong mandate and there are high expectations of success. The public's education, involvement and access to the aquatic landscape of the Bay Delta is and has always been a driving force in their support of water quality,

sport fishing and boating opportunities and nature observation. The Park District has over 60 years of experience working with the public to protect and enhance wildlife habitat areas and provide access to open space and shoreline experiences. We look forward to working very closely in partnership with all the agencies represented in CalFED and identifying and pursuing projects that will lend success to the program.

Respectfully,



Pat O'Brien
General Manager